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Q. Europeans say extraordinary renditions violate international law, you say they're legal. Who is right?

-- Properly conducted renditions are permissible under international law, and European tribunals have upheld them in specific cases.

-- I am told for example that the European Commission of Human Rights specifically rejected Carlos the Jackal's claim that his rendition from Sudan violated international law.

-- That is not to say that renditions can never be conducted in a way that would violate international law, such as if torture were involved, either as part of the rendition or if a person were rendered to a place knowing that he would be tortured or even that it is likely that he will be tortured.

-- But I want to be clear:

-- We take the prohibitions against torture, under both international law and domestic law, very seriously.

-- We do not authorize or condone torture.

-- Where there have been cases of unlawful treatment of detainees, such as in connection with Abu Ghraib, we have investigated and where appropriate we prosecute and punish those responsible.

Q. Are you saying you have rendered people from Europe or through European territory?

-- Again, I cannot and will not comment on intelligence activities, but I can say we have worked and will continue to work cooperatively with our friends and partners in Europe and elsewhere.

-- That said, I can say that a large number of the allegations I have seen in the European media are flatly wrong.

Q. Where are they being rendered to? And who are they?

-- I am not in a position to discuss intelligence information that would compromise our intelligence, law enforcement and military operations.

-- In general, these detainees are extremely dangerous terrorists who are being transferred to countries of which they are nationals or sometimes to countries that are able to detain them or prosecute them.

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Q. Are there black sites?

-- I want to be as forthcoming as possible but for reasons I hope you understand I am not going to confirm or deny intelligence activities.

-- As I have said, our publics -- rightfully -- hold us responsible for protecting our countries and our citizens.

-- I am just not in a position to discuss intelligence information that would compromise our intelligence, law enforcement and military operations.

Q. Do you think waterboarding is torture? If not, how can you say it is not cruel, inhumane, or degrading?

-- I want to avoid commenting on allegations about the legalities and details of specific practices.

-- As I've said, it is our policy to comply with all of our international obligations in our treatment of detainees: authorized interrogation procedures will not constitute torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, as defined by U.S. obligations under the Convention Against Torture.

-- Our interrogation procedures are given careful legal review by the Department of Justice for compliance with the law.

Q. When you ask countries to cooperate in these renditions, aren't you effectively asking them to break their own laws? Isn't this fundamentally inconsistent with the idea that the United States promotes the rule of law?

-- The premise that renditions are illegal is wrong. Renditions are not automatically legal or automatically illegal -- it depends on how they are carried out.

-- Cooperation in these rendition efforts is voluntary. Democratic governments have obligations to protect their citizens and their countries from the threats posed by terrorists. These governments must decide whether they want to work with us and how they want to work with us.

-- Democratic governments of course are responsible for complying with their own laws. In some cases we and other countries are finding that we need to change or adapt our laws to deal with the threat.

-- But we are certainly not asking anyone to abandon the rule of law.

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Q. Isn't the United States violating the human rights of these individuals? These are enforced disappearances, aren't they? Isn't it correct that international treaties ratified by the U.S. prohibit incommunicado detention of persons in secret locations as well?

-- Members of al Qaeda and its affiliates are unlawful combatants who may be held in accordance with the law of war. And that is what we are doing.

Q. Could the US cooperate in one of these renditions from the United States if another country requested?

-- There are a variety of ways that a person might be "rendered" under US law outside of a traditional extradition procedure. We can cooperate, but it of course depends on what is being requested.

-- So the question is not simply whether the United States could or could not cooperate in a rendition request. There are many, many different kinds of situations, and yes -- we would in an appropriate situation cooperate as best we could.

Q. What about the reports that CIA has rendered the wrong people, such as al-Masri from Germany?

-- I am not going to comment on particular allegations.

-- Our military and intelligence agencies make every effort to ensure that any individual who is detained is a member of al-Qaeda or its affiliates and poses a threat to the United States or its allies.

-- If an individual is detained in error, we take corrective action.

-- But simply because errors are sometimes made does not mean that detention activities should be stopped.

Q. Why are you opposing the McCain amendment?

-- The issues involved in the McCain Amendment are more complicated than might first seem, including issues related to separation of powers, about which there have long been differences of views between the Executive and Legislative branches.

-- Under the Constitution and our system of government, the President has responsibilities as Commander-in-Chief.

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-- Because of this, there are questions about the extent to which it is appropriate or wise for Congress to make laws about how the President should be required to conduct or not conduct interrogations, or otherwise carry out his responsibilities under the Constitution as Commander-in-Chief.

-- That said, we understand the concerns that some in Congress have expressed.

-- And we are working closely with the Congress to try to reach a satisfactory resolution of this issue.

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